

COMMUNITY AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CLINIC
YALE LAW SCHOOL

TO: Honorable Chairman Lopes, Co-Chair
Honorable Chairman Williams, Co-
Chair Members of the Housing
Committee

FROM: Adrianna Duggan, Community and Economic Development Clinic

DATE: March 9, 2022

RE: Support for S.B. 291

Dear Chairman Lopes, Chairman Williams and members of the Housing Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Adrianna Duggan, and I am a member of Yale Law School's Community and Economic Development Clinic writing in support of S.B. 291 concerning certain protections for group and family childcare homes. Our Clinic has represented All Our Kin and I am here today to urge you to support SB 291.

We are experiencing a child care crisis: 44% of Connecticut lives in a child care desert, with little or no access to quality child care.¹ This is a particular problem in suburban and rural communities.² Less than one third of Connecticut's infants and toddlers have access to licensed child care. **We also have a child care affordability crisis: annual child care for one child in Connecticut can cost more than a year of college tuition or housing.**³ Connecticut ranks 5th out of all states for the most expensive child care.⁴ By some estimates, child care in Connecticut would take up about 18% of a median family's income, a number that only about 11% of families in Connecticut can afford.⁵

Home-based child care is a major solution to this access and affordability crisis. Home-based family and group child care can help fill the child care shortage for 50,000 kids whose families need it but are unable to access it. These family and group child care homes serve an important function in their communities. Not only do home-based child cares create access to child care close to home at around two-thirds of the price of larger centers, but they also provide greater flexibility to meet the needs of different families.⁶ Home-based child care can serve the most overburdened, under-resourced families. Its community-centric model allows parents to

¹ Malik, Rasheed et al., "America's Child Care Deserts in 2018," Center for American Progress, Dec. 2018, <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/early-childhood/reports/2018/12/06/461643/americas-child-care-deserts-2018/>.

² *Id.*

³ Economic Policy Institute, The Cost of Child Care in Connecticut, <https://www.epi.org/child-care-costs-in-the-united-states/#/CT>.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Child Care Aware of America, The US and the High Cost of Child Care: A Review of Prices and Proposed Solutions for a Broken System (2018), <http://usa.childcareaware.org/advocacy-public-policy/resources/research/costofcare>.

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place their children in an environment that speaks the family's language, offers non-traditional hours, or offers care for mixed-age groups that allows siblings to be cared for together.

Home-based child care can meet Connecticut's critical child care needs. Studies show that enrollment in high-quality child care can have a profound effect on outcomes such as the likelihood of enrollment in higher education and juvenile criminal activity.⁷ The positive effect of quality child care lasts for years, and is evidenced by advanced cognitive and linguistic skills, improved test scores, and even a higher likelihood of high school graduation.⁸ Child care also increases the chance that parents—especially women—can remain in the labor force and contribute to the economy in a career suited to their education and skills.⁹ Parents agree that child care has a positive impact on their jobs, their stress levels and physical health, and their relationships both with their spouse and with their child.¹⁰

Unfortunately, home-based child care faces unnecessary barriers imposed by landlords and local regulators. Connecticut passed laws in 1987 and 1990 to reduce these barriers and promote home-based child care, but some obstacles remain. Our clinic has heard heartbreaking stories over the years of livelihoods destroyed and communities denied child care because we lack simple protections for licensed providers who are seeking to provide child care for their neighbors.

One of these stories is from an All Our Kin provider in southern Connecticut who operated a licensed child care in her rental home with her landlord's permission. She moved twice to larger units owned by the landlord to expand her child care business. Each time, she sought and received approval from the State of Connecticut's family child care licensing agency. She depended on this business as her sole source of income and relied on the landlord's promises as she developed relationships with local clients and invested in her business; she even paid to construct a fenced outdoor play area in the yard of her building. The landlord ultimately sought to evict her because of her child care business, despite no indication that it had negatively impacted any neighbors. Not only did one woman have her business and her home upended at the whim of her landlord, but a community of families lost their local child care provider.

These barriers to home-based child care are unnecessary when licensed providers are already rigorously vetted by the Office of Early Childhood. State licensing, including a 70-item checklist for health and safety, ensures home-based child care has everything from the right usable program square footage for each child's programming, to the appropriate number of adult staff for health and safety.¹¹ S.B. 291 places child care decisions where they belong, in

⁷ Korjenevitch, Maria and Rachel Dunifon, "Child Care Center Quality and Child Development," Cornell University College of Human Ecology, 2010, https://www.human.cornell.edu/sites/default/files/PAM/Parenting/Child-20Care-20Center-20Quality-20Development-20Brief_FINAL.pdf.

⁸ Kaminer, Debbie, *The Child Care Crisis and the Work Family Conflict: A Policy Rationale for Federal Legislation*, 28 BERKELEY J. OF EMP. & AND LAB. LAW 495, 500-501 (2007).

⁹ "Child Care in State Economies," Committee for Economic Development, Aug. 2015, <https://www.ced.org/pdf/Report%20-%20Child%20Care%20in%20State%20Economies.pdf>, 45.

¹⁰ "Child Care and Health in America," National Public Radio, Oct. 2016, <https://www.npr.org/documents/2016/oct/Child-Care-and-Development-Report-2016.pdf>, 12.

¹¹ OEC Providers Fact Sheet, <https://www.ctoec.org/storage/2020/01/Checklist-to-Maintaining-Regulatory->

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the hands of the families who need options and the expert state regulators who ensure those options are high-quality.

S.B. 291 can end these impediments from landlords and the local red tape that make our child care crisis worse while hurting child care providers and the families that rely on them. Many other states such as California, New York, Oregon, Minnesota and Washington have passed legislation to better protect family and group child care providers. S.B. 291 is a step in the right direction towards ending the child care crisis in Connecticut and protecting providers and families alike.

For these reasons, I urge the committee to vote in favor of this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

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